

STATEMENT OF
Nancy H. Kichak
U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

before the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, THE
FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

on

NATIONAL SECURITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

APRIL 30, 2009

Chairman Akaka, Senator Voinovich, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I appreciate your inviting me to be with you today to discuss national security professional development. We must do everything we can to sustain and strengthen the Government's capacity to protect the American people. This includes continually looking at ways to improve the ability of Federal agencies to work across organizational boundaries to protect our nation and advance our national security interests. We at the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) stand ready to do all we can to support this vital initiative.

History of national security professional development initiative

The effort to promote national security professional development began in May 2007, with Executive Order 13434, which sought to "promote the education, training, and experience of current and future professionals in national security positions" in executive branch agencies. The Executive order was intended to ensure that national security professionals are equipped to carry out coordinated national security operations with their counterparts in other Federal agencies and in non-Federal organizations. It directed the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, in coordination with the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, to submit a National Strategy for the Development of Security Professionals. The purpose of the strategy was to establish a framework that would provide "integrated education, training, and professional experience opportunities" for security professionals that would enhance their mission-related knowledge, skills, and experience and thereby improve their ability to protect national security. The order established an Executive Steering Committee,

chaired at the outset by the Director of OPM, to facilitate the implementation of the national strategy.

The Executive Steering Committee comprises officials from 17 Federal agencies and provides strategic direction for national security professional development. Leadership of the Steering Committee shifted to the Office of Management and Budget at the beginning of 2008, and an Integration Office was established a month later to provide program management. The Integration Office tracks agency progress on implementation of the national strategy, including development of agency regulations and training programs.

Once the National Strategy for the Development of Security Professionals was issued, the Executive Steering Committee developed an NSPD Implementation Plan, which was approved by the National Security Council and the Homeland Security Council last September. Federal agencies, in turn, have developed their own implementation plans based on the National Strategy and the Implementation Plan.

OPM's role

While Executive Order 13434 charges the Director of OPM with leading the establishment of a national security professional development program that provides for interagency and intergovernmental assignments and includes professional development guidelines for career advancement, the leadership of this effort shifted to the Office of Management and Budget in early 2008. OPM issued last November a recommended technical qualification for selection into Senior Executive Service (SES) positions that are designated as national security professional (NSP) positions. The qualification is for demonstrated ability to lead inter-agency, inter-governmental activities, or comparable cross-organizational activities. In issuing the technical qualification, we have highly recommended that individuals selected for NSP SES positions have previous inter-agency experience related to national security in a leadership capacity on either a temporary or permanent assignment, on a multi-agency task force, or in an inter-agency liaison capacity. The experience could have been attained either professionally or as a volunteer.

OPM held two forums on the recommended technical qualification in December 2008 and January of this year. We cosponsored these sessions along with the NSPD Integration Office. The forums included presentations by OPM staff and representatives of the Integration Office, the Department of Defense, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. We shared with the agencies a template for implementing the new technical qualification and provided an opportunity for detailed discussion of implementation approaches and issues. Agencies then were required to develop their own policies for implementing the recommended technical qualification.

OPM also has a broad oversight role regarding human resources policy related to the implementation of the order. First, we recognize, as does the National Strategy for the Development of Security Professionals, that the competencies that national security

professionals need to have will vary for each mission area and organization, while incorporating the core competencies established by the NSPD Integration Office. Therefore, the particular agencies that employ national security professionals should in large measure determine the content of their training and program implementation. OPM, though, is responsible for ensuring that training policies, as well as other human resources policies, comply with applicable laws and regulations, and that the NSPD effort is administered consistently within and across agencies. For example, we want to make sure training opportunities do not result in pre-selection of job candidates. We strive to balance the need for consistency with the need for flexibility; OPM's role is critical in this regard.

OPM has supported national security professional development in other ways as well. For example, we continue to contribute to the development of web content for www.nspd.gov, and we participate in the National Security Education and Training Consortium. The Consortium is a network of Federal education and training organizations that support the development of national security professionals, including by making recommendations for training and educational courses that should be available to them.

Looking forward

Some organizational and structural elements of the national security professional development program may need to be subject to ongoing review – for example, whether leadership of the Executive Steering Committee should reside in OPM, the Office of Management and Budget, or some other designee of the National Security Council and Homeland Security Council. However such matters are resolved, OPM stands ready to provide ongoing policy support regarding the selection, training, and development of national security professionals and related matters. This issue is likely to remain one of critical importance to the Federal Government and the American public for a very long time.

Thank you again for inviting me here today. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

